Outbreak Overview

On Friday, December 7, 2018, the Palau Ministry of Health alerted the public of an outbreak of dengue fever following the first ever laboratory confirmation of two cases with dengue serotype 3. This poses a significant concern for public health as the whole population is potentially vulnerable to infection.

In response to the outbreak, the Ministry of Health activated its emergency response team on December 7, 2018. The team has been tasked with raising community awareness of the outbreak and dengue prevention measures, conducting disease surveillance and reporting, strengthening environmental control measures, and ensuring adequate resources are available to combat the outbreak.

Between December 9 – December 15, 2019, there were 11 new cases reported. This brings the total number of cases for the month of December 2019 to 28 and from December 1, 2018 – December 8, 2019 to 737 cases.

There have been two deaths attributed to dengue infection during this outbreak.

Cases by State and Koror Hamlets

Epi Curve

Lab Testing

- The Belau National Hospital (BNH) Laboratory and laboratories at three private clinics in Koror have the capacity to test symptomatic patients for dengue via a rapid diagnostic test kit, SD Bioline Dengue Duo ( Dengue NS1 Ag + IgG/IgM) by Abbott.
- Confirmatory testing and serotyping is done by the Hawaii State Laboratory (HSL) and Guam Public Health Laboratory (GPHL).
- There have been 266 serotype cases of DENV-3. The last recorded cases of DENV-2 in Palau were from November of 2018.
- During week 37, two imported cases of dengue were identified with travel history to Bangkok, Thailand. Specimens were referred to Guam Public Health Laboratory (GPHL) for serotyping, which confirmed infection with DENV-1. No additional cases of dengue serotype 1 have been identified since.

Response Measures

One year has passed since the declaration of the current outbreak of dengue 3. Week 50 saw a total of eleven (11) cases of dengue reported, including ten (10) Koror residents (Ngirkebesang (5), Meyuns (2), Iyebukel (1), Ngermid (1) and Ngerchesar (1)).

The Ministry of Health Dengue Response Team continues to promote efforts to increase community involvement in mosquito source reduction activities through partnerships with state governments and the greater community. Prevention activities aim to promote the dengue prevention message in schools and the general community in advance of the upcoming holidays and scheduled public events.

The Team continues to provide updates on the dengue outbreak to the community through a weekly radio spot at the national radio station and dissemination of print material about dengue prevention to the community.

The Communicable Disease Unit and the DEH Vector Control Program continue to investigate all reported cases of dengue fever and implement vector control measures.

The Palau Ministry of Health promotes the dengue 3S messages:

- Search and eliminate mosquito breeding sites.
- Self-protect by wearing insect repellent and ensuring a mosquito-free environment.
- Seek early consultation if you show severe signs or symptoms of dengue.

The next report for epi week 51 will be released on Tuesday, December 24, 2019.